

May 15, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write to express our strong support and sincere gratitude for the recent Order addressing budget shortfalls in the Universal Service Fund's (USF) High-Cost program. The Order is an essential, immediate step in the right direction, and we now encourage the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to continue down this path by acting quickly on the notice of proposed rulemaking to provide long-term, predictable support. Such additional steps are necessary to ensure rural Americans have access to high quality voice and broadband services.

The FCC's recent Order approving an infusion of funds into the USF is greatly welcomed, and will provide needed support for small, rural carriers that rely on the High-Cost USF program. Despite this, persistent limitations on resources can affect the ability of smaller broadband providers to deliver services in our country's most rural communities. The FCC's cost model for smaller operators electing model-based USF support is not yet funded at the designed levels, and carriers not receiving model-based support will once again face significant funding cuts when the program's new fiscal year takes effect on July 1, 2018. These recurring budget shortfalls result in lower speeds, more unserved locations, and higher prices for rural consumers and businesses.

Congress has expressed consistent, bipartisan support for addressing shortfalls in the USF program. In April 2017, 58 Senators called on the FCC to provide adequate resources for broadband delivery services to rural consumers in areas that are the hardest and costliest to serve. In May 2017, 102 Representatives wrote to the FCC, expressing similar concerns about the impacts of insufficient USF resources on rural consumers.

We commend the FCC's actions thus far to address and modernize USF support. Taking action on the notice of proposed rulemaking and establishing lasting solutions that allow the reformed High-Cost mechanism to work as designed would enable many smaller operators to offer high quality, affordable broadband to consumers across rural America. It is important to consider any modifications needed to meet the program's objectives of ensuring consistent network build-out and strengthening ongoing service, for locations otherwise unserved, in our nation's high-cost rural areas.

Thank you for the actions you have undertaken thus far to support the USF and for considering this request. We share your goal of eliminating the digital divide and look forward to working with you to maintain accessible, affordable broadband for rural American consumers and businesses.

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



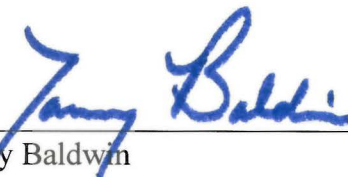
John Thune  
Chairman, Senate Commerce Committee



Bill Nelson  
Ranking Member, Senate Commerce Committee



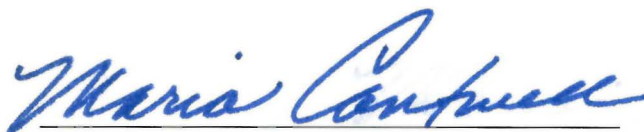
Roy Blunt  
United States Senator



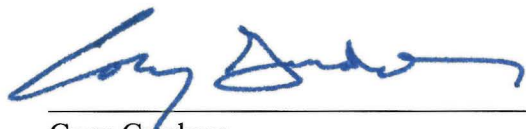
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



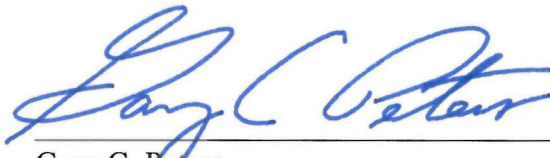
Jerry Moran  
United States Senator



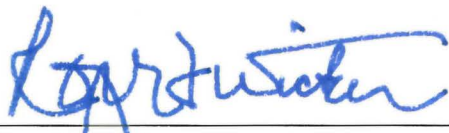
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



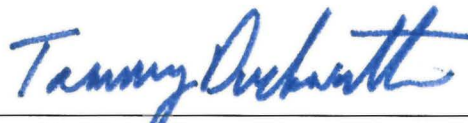
Cory Gardner  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



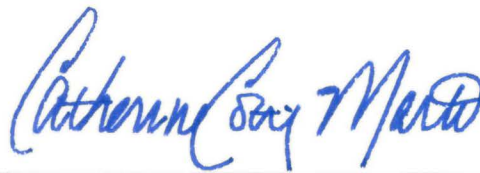
Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



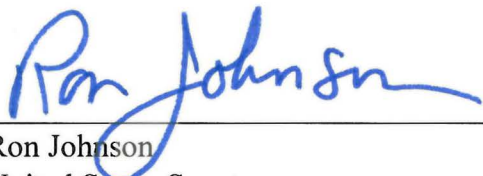
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Todd Young  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



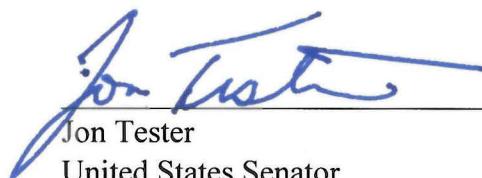
Ron Johnson  
United States Senator



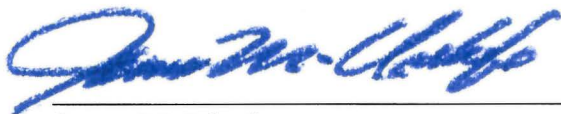
Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator



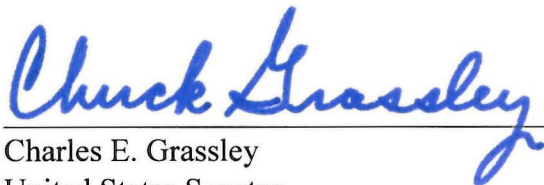
Jon Tester  
United States Senator



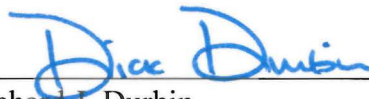
James M. Inhofe  
United States Senator



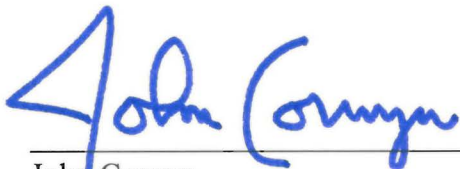
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



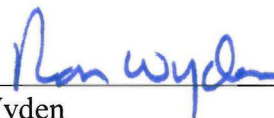
John Cornyn  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Pat Roberts  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Michael B. Enzi  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



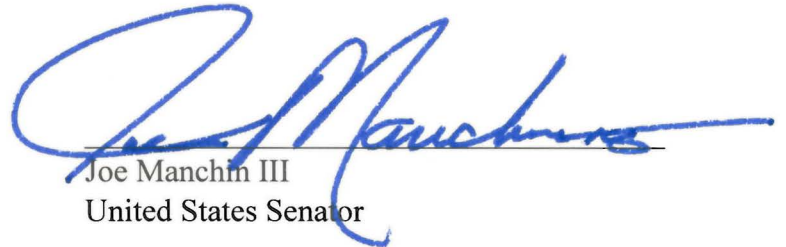
John Barrasso, M.D.  
United States Senator



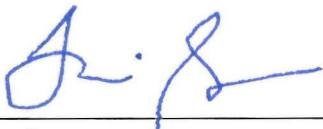
Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator



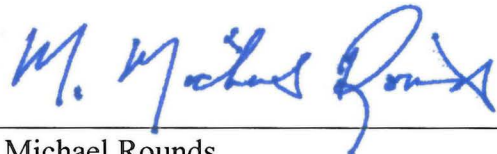
John Hoeven  
United States Senator



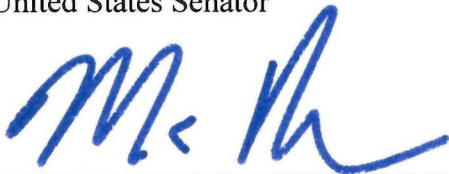
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



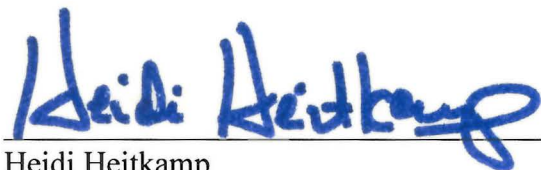
Tim Scott  
United States Senator



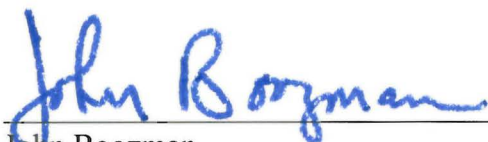
M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator



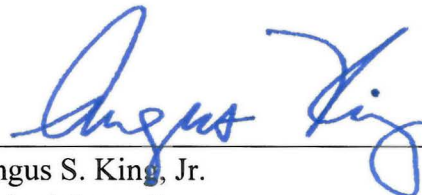
Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp  
United States Senator



John Boozman  
United States Senator



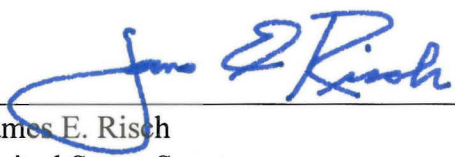
Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator




Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



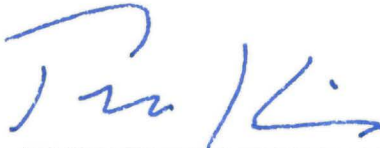
James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator



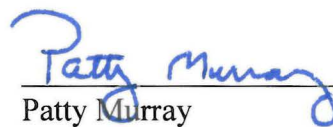
Tom Cotton  
United States Senator



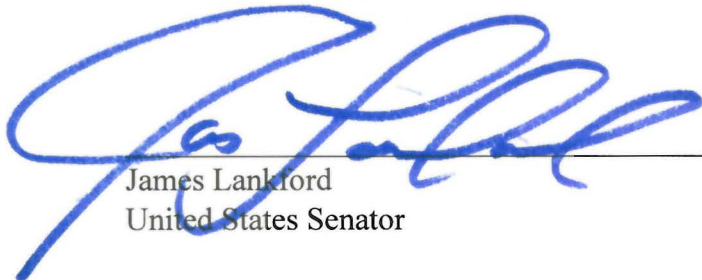
Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator



Patty Murray  
United States Senator




James Lankford  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



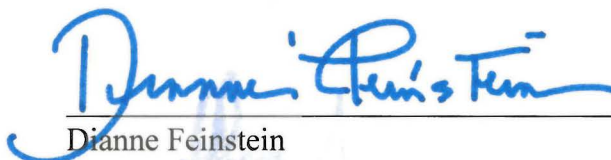
Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator



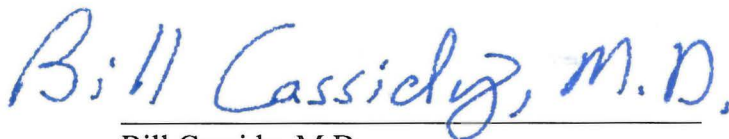
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



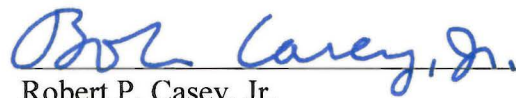
Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator

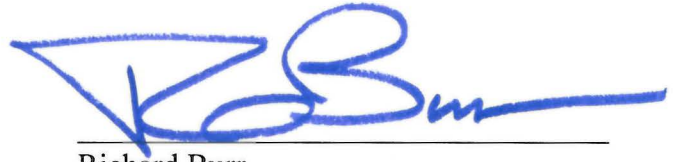


Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Rob Portman  
United States Senator



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Richard Burr  
United States Senator



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Ben Sasse  
United States Senator



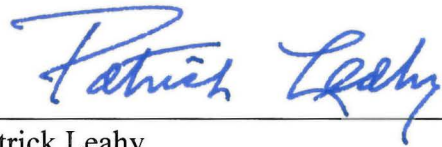
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Mark Warner  
United States Senator



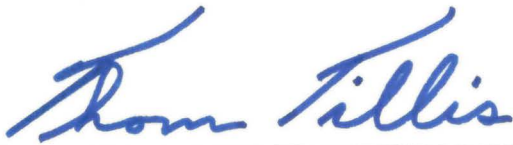
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Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



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Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



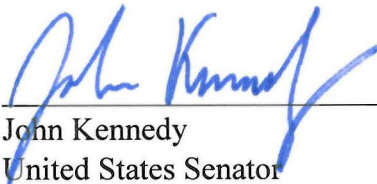
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Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



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Cindy Hyde-Smith  
United States Senator



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John Kennedy  
United States Senator